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Letter dated 28 November 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I would like to thank you, once again, for your kind assistance in arranging for the President of the Republic of Italy, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, to address the Security Council during the meeting on Guinea-Bissau on 18 November 2003.

As you will recall, during my statement of 20 November on behalf of the European Union within the Security Council public debate on the holding of an International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, after having informed the Members of the Security Council of the fact that President Ciampi had to cut short his visit to the United States of America to attend the solemn funeral for the victims of the devastating attack on the Italian compound in Nassiriya, Iraq, I also informed the Members that the President had asked me to present the statement that he had prepared (from which any original reference to the specific Guinea-Bissau dossier has been removed, to make it a broader and more comprehensive statement on the African continent as a whole) so that it could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

In this regard, I would greatly appreciate it if you could have the attached text (see annex) circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Marcello **Spatafora**
Ambassador

03-64017 (E) 041203

Annex

Annex to the letter dated 28 November 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Speech by the President of Italy to the Security Council

Africa and Italy: a mutual commitment and a source of hope
(New York, 18 November 2003)

As an Italian, as a European, I believe that we would be committing an unforgivable error if we were to fail to commit ourselves, with renewed energy and determination, to a decisive effort to solve the problem of poverty.

It afflicts hundreds of millions of people on our planet: it demands an innovative and lasting alliance between the North and the South.

The split between the industrialised world and the developing world is continuing to reveal itself dramatically, particularly in Africa.

I have long been convinced, and I reiterated this a couple of months ago in Paris at UNESCO, that the real challenge of the 21st century is the North-South divide.

The international community, and primarily Europe, has a historic duty towards the African continent.

Europe and Africa have been linked in many ways for thousands of years. Europe wishes to offer the world her own historic values; social advancement and human development are one essential aspect of them.

Africa cannot therefore leave us unmoved.

In our globalised world every policy failure, and every failed negotiation, is everyone's failure.

The institution of NEPAD (*New Partnership for Africa's Development*) two years ago was a bold insight of Africa's most farsighted leaders. It demonstrated that when it wishes to, politics can look beyond the short term.

Africa took on the responsibility for her rebirth, and urged the industrialised world to accompany her along the way.

In my discussions with numerous African Heads of States I have seen that they are full of hope, driven by genuine motives, and steadfastly determined to hold pessimism at bay.

I have been impressed by Africa's determination to take her destiny into her own hands, to move ahead along the path of sustainable development, confident of putting herself forward as a reliable and trustworthy partner of the developed countries.

From the outset, Italy has always been a strong supporter of NEPAD, convinced of her duty to share responsibilities for our mutual benefit.

Africa is committing herself to institute democracy, guarantee the certainty of law, good governance, and respect for human rights. The industrialised world must guarantee investment, fresh resources, assistance and access to the markets.

The attainment of concrete poverty eradication targets is now a possibility.

The Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Conference, the G8 Summits at Genoa, Kananaskis and Evian, and the Johannesburg Summit, have fuelled the hope that a dynamic process has been set in motion.

Indeed, some progress has certainly been made in terms of development assistance, combating disease, improving and upgrading infrastructure, protecting the environment, democratisation, and security.

The Africans themselves have been playing a leading role in brokering solutions to conflicts, and taking part in peacekeeping missions.

The enhanced system of dialogue, understanding, and cooperation that has been created between Africa's institutions, the United Nations, the European Union and the international community has facilitated these results.

Yet in Africa ancient problems that date back to the distant past still remain unresolved.

This is demonstrated by the inadequacy of the commitments undertaken in terms of actual needs, distortions in world trade, Africa's constantly dwindling share of world exports, the horrific social and human costs of AIDS, and the fact that sub-Saharan Africa remains the only region in the world where poverty continues to rise instead of declining.

Africa is still a land with authoritarian regimes, armed conflict, infectious diseases, high mortality rates, pollution, and illiteracy.

The rule of law is struggling to become consolidated there; yet without law, no civil society can move forward. Democracy is still too fragmented and sporadic; yet the democratic yearning for the certainty of rules governing all, and accepted by all, is struggling to be satisfied.

These evils are being compounded today by new challenges.

For Africa, unlike other continents, globalisation is more a source of concern than of hope. Africa must be able to share in the fruits of interdependency.

The international community must promptly set itself a definite target, and make sure that it moves towards it without delay and without being sidetracked.

To shift our attention away from Africa under the pressure of other events or priorities would be a grave error.

The possibility of falling short of the Millennium objectives, just as an important moment is approaching to monitor progress with our commitments, must be ruled out.

In taking up these commitments we cannot ignore the linkage that exists between poverty and marginalisation on the one hand, and the spread of violence, extremism and terrorism on the other.

The despair and humiliation which holds millions upon millions of human beings in thrall, sidelining them from society, are narrowing the horizons of hope.

If Africa can demonstrate her ability to win her battle, as the century opens, according to the spirit and the letter indicated by NEPAD, and defeat the vicious circle of war and poverty, instability and marginalisation, we can look forward to a more just, a more stable and a more secure world.

Africa's rebirth is the litmus test of the West's ability to spread the same principles of freedom, democracy and social advancement that have guaranteed our prosperity, to a region that complements our own.

Italy knows that we have a duty of solidarity and justice towards Africa, but we also share bonds of friendship and culture.

I am personally committed to ensuring that this sense of responsibility shared by the Italian people will never fail.

Italy was one of the first countries to adopt debt conversion and debt cancellation for the developing countries.

We are now ready to cancel a further 2.7 billion euro of the poorest countries' debt, in addition to the 1.8 billion that have been written-off already.

I trust that the creditor community will proceed promptly to cancel 100% of the financial and commercial debt of the world's poorest countries.

Italy looks on in horror at the horrific tragedy of the thousands of Africans set out in a desperately flight from dire poverty and armed conflict, bound for our shores.

The millions of African immigrants living in the European Union are a new component of our society, and with their commitment and work, complying with the values and rules of their host society, they are consolidating our respect for them.

But migration is no solution to the problems of poverty, unemployment and population pressure in Africa.

These migrants are fleeing in their thousands today. How could we cope if hundreds of thousands were to migrate tomorrow? How could we host them in a Europe that is already so densely populated?

Africa does not need new strategies, but action, verification, and tangible results.

Policies need determination, goodwill, and then implementation.

There is no alternative to local economic and social development.

North and South must work together to create conditions that will enable Africans to achieve decent living standards in their own land.

Capital and technology transfer, business startups, cooperation with regard to health care, the development of infrastructure, and opening-up the markets are the objectives being pursued by Italy, and by Europe.

Europe and Africa occupy the same historical, geographic and cultural area.

Africa was the first test bed for the European Union's external relations.

Even before the Union was able to adopt a foreign policy of its own, the Treaties instituting the European Communities had enshrined the principle that Europe and Africa had to create *"an association to foster the economical and social development of the Countries and territories of Africa and to create tight relationships between them and the European Community as a whole"*.

Europe is conscious of the need for a substantial and coherent commitment.

Africa is a continent in need of hope. The European Union intends to stand by Africa's side, driven by a spirit of fellowship.

The aim is to accompany the rebirth of Africa on three fronts: the economy, the political and social structures, and security.

Operation Artemis was the first military mission undertaken by the Union outside Europe's borders. The Democratic Republic of Congo was one of the first testing grounds of the Union's newly established capacity to promote stability in neighbouring areas.

Africa must also be a place in which Europe can verify her ability to speak with a single voice. In the United Nations, too, Europe's political action must be increasingly more united.

The problems and questions that arise regarding the African continent confirm our conviction of the need to strengthen the United Nations, endowing it with instruments that are adequate to respond to today's challenges.

It plays an essential role in Africa. The Security Council is right to keep the attention of the international community focused on the issue of the conflicts in Africa and the consolidation of peace there.

Without peace and security there can be no development.

Without the United Nations, Africa would still be an even more distant reality and experience.

There is no alternative to the legitimating and stabilising power of the United Nations.

NEPAD is not yet two years old. Its objectives are all for the long-term.

Africa has enormous wealth and development potential.

Africa's leaders have demonstrated commitment, and developed capacities to deal with the continent's problems.

These are a sound basis for changing whatever lies within our power to change in the world: making a consistent, continuous and concrete commitment which certainly concerns human solidarity, but is also related to the interests of us all, linked to those of the African peoples.